

FY 2009 Fact Sheet

For Potential Off Highway Vehicle Program Grant Applicants

Welcome to the Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Program! Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) administers the OHV Program with funds appropriated by the State Legislature. The program has three components: the OHV Grant Program, enforcement of OHV laws, and a Safety and Ethics Education Program. OHV Program funding derives from 1/8 of 1% of the Distributor's Gasoline License Tax, registration decal fees, dealer registration, and nonresident permit fees. The Off Highway Vehicle Advisory Committee (OHVAC) is a council that advises FWP on such things as OHV Program expenditures and a variety of related trails issues. In FY 2007, FWP awarded 12 OHV grants totaling \$200,000.

OHV grant applicants (sponsors) can include federal, state, county or municipal agencies, private associations, and clubs. A sponsor is not required to have matching funds to apply for an OHV grant. After the grant sponsor and FWP sign a grant agreement, FWP may advance up to 90% of the grant amount to the sponsor. After project completion, final reimbursement of OHV funds will be approved for documented project expenditures.

The goal of Montana's OHV grant program is to distribute as much money as possible to as many eligible sponsors as possible in an effort to increase access to recreational motorized trails. However, the OHV Program may not be the right grant program in every case. That is why we have listed some of the more important technical and regulatory aspects of the program for your review and consideration. Please be sure you understand OHV grant rules and regulations **BEFORE** you begin the application process; it could save you considerable time and money.

1. Please read all materials before making the first mark on the OHV grant application. This will help you develop a timeline for your application to ensure you don't miss a deadline.
2. Please provide the detailed descriptive information specifically applicable to the project for which you seek funding. Adequate documentation is very important, but be careful--more is not necessarily better—include only what you need and no more. Your application must convince FWP and the OHVAC that your project meets program criteria as identified in *OHV Program Guidelines*, is well thought out and designed, and has considered all reasonable alternatives.
3. Any applicant with an OHV grant approved prior to 2005 that has not yet completed that grant is not eligible to apply for an FY 2009 grant.
4. Maps and photographs of the site should be high quality. Photos of the project area and clear general design plans should accompany your application. Maps

should include an area map of the surrounding ten miles and a site map of the immediate project area.

5. All projects must satisfy the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). If a NEPA assessment for a project on federal property has already been made, please note that a NEPA categorical exclusion does not satisfy MEPA. Each application, with the exception of categories noted in item number six, must contain a completed MEPA/NEPA Checklist. Project effects may be either negative or positive. Use biologist's comments from the Biological Review Form as applicable. For example, displacing wildlife from a calving area or winter range is a negative impact while improving a trail to lead people away from a calving area or winter range is a positive impact. Dated MEPA NEPA Checklists and biological review forms are good for two years. If the proposed project is exactly the same as last year's (no variations whatsoever), the MEPA NEPA Checklist and biological review forms from last year may be used with this application.
6. Only the following types of projects are exempted from completion of the MEPA/NEPA Environmental Checklist: ethics or safety education brochures and portable exhibits and displays.
7. Project alternatives need to be discussed in the narrative section of the MEPA/NEPA Checklist. Provide a good discussion of the preferred project alternative and the other reasonable alternatives considered, including the required "no action" alternative. At a minimum, the discussion must include the "no action" alternative and two additional alternatives.
8. If a NEPA assessment for a project on federal property has already been made, please note: a NEPA categorical exclusion does not satisfy MEPA. Therefore, the MEPA/NEPA Checklist must be completed in all cases.
9. Sponsors should pay special attention to the public-comment requirements at the end of the MEPA/NEPA Checklist. Requirements include soliciting public input to the proposed project through a legal ad in a daily newspaper with widest circulation in the immediate project area. The legal ad must run for at least one day. The public comment period must be open for at least 30 days. Please plan your grant application schedule accordingly.
10. Please describe the pre-project status of noxious weeds in the exact area proposed for your project and how you will monitor and control weeds on the project area during and after construction. It is not enough to simply state that the Forest Service Ranger District, the County, or the City has a weed plan, although these are all good things to know. However, the sponsor should describe the weed status at the project site, what kind of weed encroachment the project might encourage, and what the sponsor proposes to do to stop weed encroachment. Weed control costs on a project are legitimate trail costs and the sponsor may

include these as part of the grant request. Exempted projects, such as ethics or safety education brochures and portable exhibits and displays, do not require a weed plan. The weed plan is valid for a period of two years for the purposes of an OHV grant application, if the project proposals are identical.

11. Wildlife and Fisheries Review Forms are a necessity and must include dated signatures of a qualified agency fish and wildlife biologist (Fish, Wildlife & Parks; US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, etc.) or professional consulting biologist and must be dated within 2 years of the project application deadline. A fisheries biologist must fill out the Fisheries Review form and a wildlife biologist must fill out the Wildlife Review form. It is the reviewing biologist's responsibility to determine potential effects on fish and wildlife resources, including federally listed threatened, endangered or sensitive species. The biologist must determine the potential effects, suggest mitigations to minimize negative impacts, or suggest the project has impacts that are too great and cannot be mitigated and should not be considered. If the proposed project is exactly the same as the 2007 application (no variations whatsoever), the MEPA NEPA Checklist and biological review forms from 2007 may be used with this application.
12. During the biological review, the biologist may inform the sponsor that special permits are required before FWP can award a grant. Permits, such as 310, 124 or 404, may be required for work performed in close proximity to streams, wetlands, rivers, bogs, etc. Please supply biologists with detailed project descriptions and good project area maps. We advise sponsors to have this information to biologists prior to May 16, 2008. Exempted projects, such as ethics or safety education brochures and portable exhibits and displays, do not require completed wildlife or fisheries review forms.
13. A sponsor may submit only one application per year. An application may contain more than one project phase. If the application contains more than one distinct project phase, the applicant must prioritize those phases.
14. All projects seeking funding must comply with existing federal, state and jurisdictional laws, regulations and ordinances.
15. The sponsor must provide all information requested. The application must be postmarked by July 1, 2008! Late or incomplete applications will not be considered for funding.
16. FWP staff review and rank OHV applications with input from the OHV Advisory Committee. Final grant approval comes from FWP. Successful applicants will receive a project agreement, which must be signed and returned by an appropriate official of the sponsor's organization.

If you have questions or concerns regarding any aspect of your application, please call Ray Paige (444-7317) or Clint Blackwood (444-4585) of the Off Highway Vehicle Program.